

SUBTERRANEA BRITANNICA

Bulletin No. 9

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Subterranea Britannica is in association with Société Française D'Étude des
Souterrains of France, and Arbeitskreis für Erdstallforschung of Germany.

Bulletin compiled and typed by Sylvia P. Beamon.

EDITORIAL

The biggest event since the last Bulletin has been the International Symposium in Cambridge which was organised by our Federation. It is reported in here and you will see that it was a most successful and well attended occasion. It was a pleasure to welcome so many of our French, German and Dutch colleagues. The papers given at the Symposium will be published. We are most grateful to the societies who acted as hosts (notably Nottingham Historical Arts Society, Friends of Nottingham Museums and the Medway Military Research Group) on the excursions. We include an extract from a letter we have received from M. Serge AVRILLEAU, the President of the Société Française D'Étude des Souterrains:

"Je tiens, au nom de la Société Française D'Étude des Souterrains, à vous remercier vivement pour toute l'organisation de la Conférence Internationale à laquelle vous nous avez permis de participer ces jours derniers.

Les souterrains que vous nous avez montrés nous ont beaucoup intéressés et nous vous sommes très reconnaissants de nous les avoir si bien rendus accessibles.

Je vous prie de bien vouloir transmettre nos félicitations à toutes les personnes qui ont, auprès de vous, rendues possibles ces excursions, ces visites et ces conférences ...

En vous remerciant encore pour tout, je vous prie d'agréer l'expression de mes sentiments très distingués."

You will be pleased to know that membership of the Federation continues to increase and we welcome the Friends of Nottingham Museums as a member.

Material offered for the Bulletin continues to increase and the editorial Committee will always welcome preliminary accounts of local field work.

JOHN ALEXANDER

OCTOBER DAY CONFERENCE AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (CAMBS. & HERTS. BRANCH)

It was with some disappointment that the Chairman had to announce that our expected speakers, Daniel List, Vice-President of S.F.E.S. and his wife had not arrived from France to attend this meeting held at Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge on 28th October.

After the formal business of the Annual General Meeting when Mrs. Jacqueline Sumner was elected onto the Committee as Librarian and Graham Thrussell was to be invited to become the Young People's Representative, the meeting continued with the reading of papers.

The main paper given was: Conduits and Sewers of the Cluniac Priory at Lewes by Richard Lewis, Field Director of the Lewes Archaeological Society. A report of the subterranean aspects of the Priory are promised for a future bulletin.

In the afternoon Rod Le Gear, of the Kent Archaeological Society, spoke on the recognition of dene-holes in Hangman's Wood; the Sandstone Mine at Westerham (see p. 6) and Eastry an underground folly.

Philip Marsh, of the Tunnel Study Group gave an account and showed members by slides Ramsgate railway and harbour tunnels. He finalised his talk with illustrations of the Bath Stone mines which closed in 1961. The 'long wall'

October Conference cont'd

method of extraction had been used here by leaving large chambers with large retaining walls.

Members of the Nottingham Historical Arts Society then described the latest cave system found near the Saxon ditch, Middle Pavement, Nottingham, and probably used for wine storage which was common in the town. Malt kilns were also discussed. These had become disused by the middle of the 17th century.

SYLVIA P. BEAMON.

REPORT OF THE 1978 JOINT SYMPOSIUM OF SUBTERRANEA BRITANNICA IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE SOCIÉTÉ FRANÇAISE D'ÉTUDE DES SOUTERRAINS. CAMBRIDGE 13TH - 16TH JULY.

The Symposium was held in the Benson Room, Magdalene College, Cambridge and research papers on various aspects of subterranean structures in Britain, France and Germany (see below) were presented. Several aspects of subterranea were covered, ranging from the Essex and Kent deneholes to cellar systems in Germany and rock carvings in France.

In the afternoon of July 14th, the party proceeded to visit two local subterranean structures. Fowlmere tunnel, a narrow passage in chalk which links two houses under a road, was the first; little is known of the construction or function of this tunnel, but it is a 'classic' secret passage. Following this, the party visited Royston, where it was received by the Town Mayor, Mrs. A. Nicholls before studying the carvings in the Royston Cave. Sylvia Beamon explained her interpretation of the medieval carvings which cover the walls of the cave.

On returning to Cambridge, the day was rounded off with a Bastille Day dinner at Magdalene College.

Saturday 15th saw a day trip to Nottingham, where the party was ably guided round the several systems of tunnels and subterranean workplaces by the members of the Friends of the Nottingham Museums and the Historical Arts Society. The large Drury Hill and Bridlesmith Gate's complexes were studied, and the party was shown a recently discovered underground chapel which came to light during re-development.

On the 16th the Symposium was concluded with a visit to the Napoleonic-period underground bunker system at Amberst Redoubt, Chatham. The Medway Military Research Group, which is attempting to have the fortress restored, conducted the party through the subterranean barracks, storerooms and gun emplacements.

NIGEL PENNICK,
Publicity Officer.

SUMMARIES OF THE PAPERS READ AT THE INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM, 13TH - 16TH JULY.

1. Rod LE GEAR - Chalk Mining on Medieval Kentish Farms: In Medieval times, between the 13th and 14th Centuries A.D., the cultivation of wheat and barley was very profitable. To bring more land under cultivation, assarts on clearances of the woodlands were undertaken. The soils supporting this woodland was often impoverished, and in the case of those on the Thanet Sand beds, were acidic and badly leached. In order to improve the soil, liberal quantities of chalk were spread over the fields from narrow shafted mines known to the modern investigator as 'Densholes'. The chalk was mined and distributed over the land in late autumn so that the winter frosts would break down the nodules to a powdery consistency.

Summaries of the Papers cont'd

The shafts, around one metre in diameter, would be sunk as close as possible to the field boundaries so that any subsidence would not interfere with ploughing operations. The underground chambers of these deneholes show a uniformity of size and shape. A narrow shaft would be sunk through the overlying strata until the chalk was reached, when, after leaving sufficient chalk for roof thickness, two sets of three chambers were excavated, giving a double-trefoil ground plan.

2. Abbé Pierre NOLLENT - The Quarrying of Marl in the District of Orlean and Châtres: A lot of tunnels found today in this area are quarries for the extraction of marl. The marl was used as early as the Roman period to improve the topsoil and this practice continued until the end of the 19th Century as evidenced from the Farming Land Records.

When the layer of marl was within a contour of land adits were constructed and extraction was carried out by using teams of men and donkeys. If the strata was deeper extraction was made by digging shafts with chambers similar to the British method.

3. Prof. Raymond MAUNY - Discovery in 1879 of an ovoid pit in the Middle of Sarcophagus in the Church of Rivarenes (Indre et Loire) France: When the 19th Century church of Rivarenes was demolished in 1879 to build a new one, numerous limestone coffins stratified in a series of levels, the foundations of an older building and an ovoid pit were found under the pavement partly cut into the rock coffins.

The presence of this ovoid pit central to the early Medieval coffins in a church, leads us to suppose that it might have been a ritual pit of the same nature as those found in several places in France of similar age (6th - 8th Centuries). It would be interesting to excavate there to try to find it again and study the whole matter.

4. Dorothee KLEINMANN - Primary information on Souterrains in Central Germany: Two types of souterrains are found in Central Germany. In the loess covered areas of the coastal plain there are pits known as 'loess holes'. Their dating is rather unsatisfactory but they have some resemblance to the largely Medieval 'Erdställe' of Bavaria.

The houses of Medieval towns in Thuringia and Upper Saxony in the same region are equipped with systems of cellars on two or three levels. Local investigators think they were constructed for economic reasons in connection with the storage of beer.

5. Sylvia P. BEAMON - Underground Structure at The Warren, Royston, Herts: Discovered in 1964 this structure was cone shaped with a central pillar and contained debris including pottery, discarded wine bottles etc. of the Victorian era. The hypothesis as to its function initially was that it was a lime kiln, but subsequent investigation by members of Subterranea Britannica in January 1976 showed various anomalies, not least, that it would have been unusual to burn lime in a construction of chalk itself; part of which was actually constructed in the bedrock. The exact function of this structure is still in doubt but other suggestions put forward have been a cess pit (the most likely) and a gas inspection pit.

6. Frank MORGAN - An Account of the Lime Houses of the Buxton Area: When the dross and slag from the lime working hardened by weathering, workers burrowed into the man-made hillocks to create dwellings for their families from at least the 18th - 19th Centuries A.D. (Ref: Sub. Brit. Bull. 6 & 8)

7. Karl SCHWARZFISCHER - Observations on newly discovered Erdställe (souterrains) in Germany: This contribution was presented in French and discussed the recently found Erdställe at Trebersdorf, Zandt and Untervierau where debris found in the entrances was deposited in such a way as to suggest ritual offerings.

Summaries of the Papers cont'd

8. Karl SCHWARZFISCHER - The Stratigraphy of the Erdställe: 288 souterrains have now been registered. Of these 191 contained pot sherds which can be dated, and animal bone deposits were obtained from 118. Charcoal samples were retrieved from 60 souterrains and 74 contained iron objects.
9. Daniel and Annie LIST showed slides of Châtres sur Cher with Abbe Nollent (Ref: Sub. Brit. Bull. No. 7, p.13) and Dénezé sous Doué (op. cit. p. 14/5.)
10. Alan MACCORMICK - Nottingham Caves: He described the large variety of man-made caves and tunnels, and their various uses which members were to view on their tour the following day.

SYLVIA P. BEAMON.

N.B. A fuller account of the papers will be published in the Proceedings of the Symposium in due course.

A COMMENT ON THE FOWLMERE PASSAGE FROM THE ABBÉ NOLLENT

Abbé Nollent, founder of the S.F.E.S., was most interested to see the passage at the Old Manor House, Fowlmere, Cambridgeshire. In particular, he was interested in the 'niche-seats' which he thought could have been for sentries. He has sent us an item illustrating this as follows:

"... On October 5th 1974 there was a caving-in under a tractor 300 m. from the Church at Dambron and about 3 km. 500 from Artenay (Eure et Loir). A similar collapse took place recently in the same parish at Usseau between the Grand Canton and the village, in October 1975.

At Grand Canton two shafts must have been made since they joined where the fall of the central vault of a chamber led to their discovery. The north approach passage shows a lateral niche with moulding (bahut) followed by a small gate (P); there was also a 'sentry box' consisting of two seats, facing each other, leaving room only for the knees (S & S).

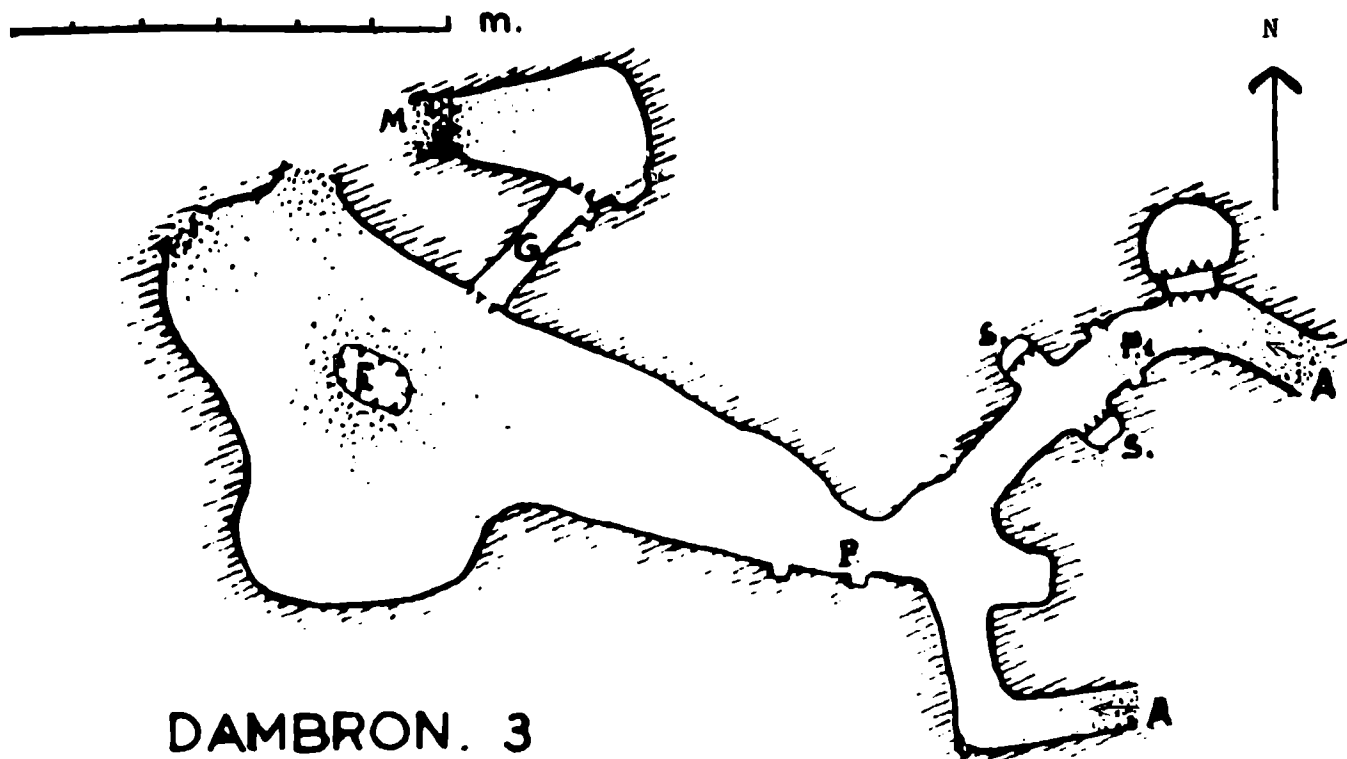
This is the first time in our district that there has been found a post to guard the entrance. It is the same device which was found at the beginning of the century, in the Cantal, at Montmeil, parish of Laroquebron.

Beyond the large chamber, a passage (G) two metres long, opens into a trapezoid room possibly with a blocked-up entrance (H).

It would be daring to suggest a precise dating for the excavating of the Grand Canton in Dambron. Pottery fragments from the 12th and 14th Centuries were found in the filling..."

I also considered that these 'niche-seats' at Fowlmere were likely to have been used by persons guarding the passage, particularly as there are post holes which could have contained crossed bars. It would also have been possible for two persons to have stood on the seats in a crouched position thereby having an advantage over any intruders. - S. P. Beamon.

We are indebted to Mrs. Andrée Thompson for the translation. The previous article on the Fowlmere Passage appeared in Sub. Brit. Bull. No. 2 pp. 6 - 8. Photostat copies of the article are available from the Publication Secretary on request.



DAMBRON. 3 Le Grand-Canton

WESTERHAM SANDSTONE MINE: A PRELIMINARY NOTE.

A group of derelict mine galleries exists beneath Hosey Common, Westerham, Kent (N.G.R. TQ 454529). In recent years the entrance adits have been closed with strong iron gates and padlocks in order to prevent undue disturbance to the bat population which hibernate in the tunnels during the winter months. A survey and archaeological examination was commenced during 1975.

The tunnels (average 2.10 m. high by 3.70 m. wide) are the remains of an extensive mine which was driven into the Hythe Beds of the Lower Greensand; they were excavated to extract the building stone known as Kentish Ragstone. Nearly 1500 m. of passages have been surveyed in three separate sets of tunnels. A fourth series is thought to exist south of series III but is not accessible.

The mine is still structurally sound, and only series II has had any serious roof falls. The access restrictions will prevent vandalism in the galleries and hopefully preserve them.

The history of the mine is completely unknown at the present time. The very overgrown state of the access roads, together with the mining methods employed, indicates a considerable period of disuse.

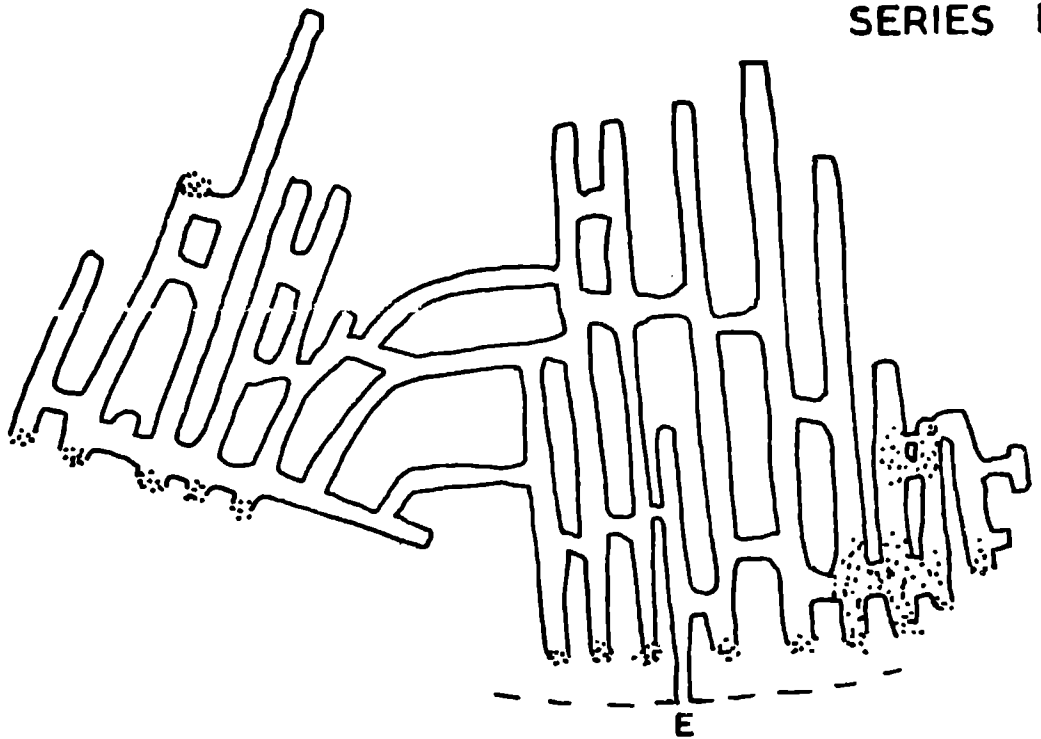
R. F. LE GEAR.

WESTERHAM MINES

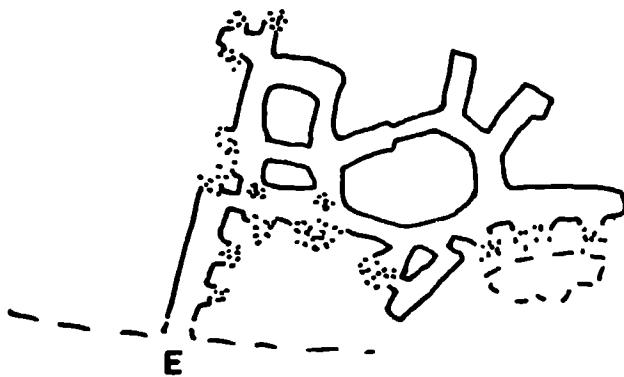
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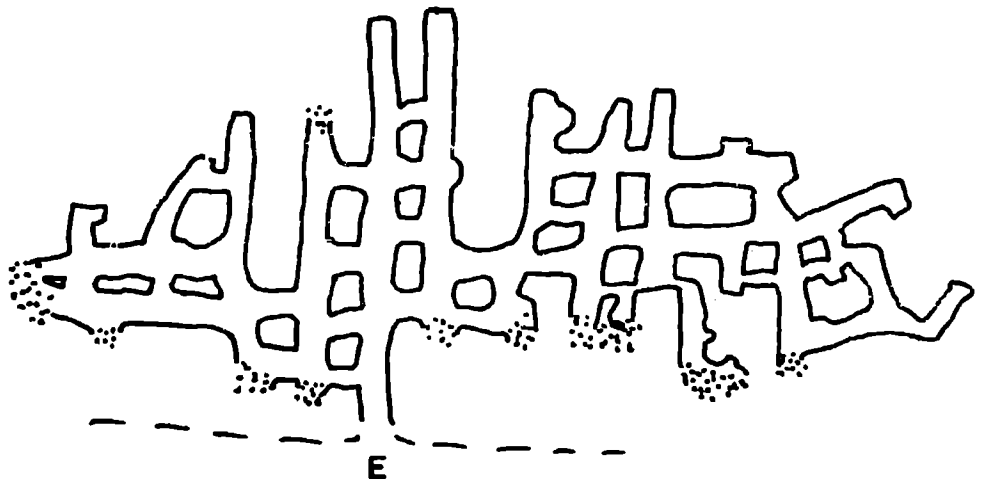
SERIES I



SERIES II



SERIES III

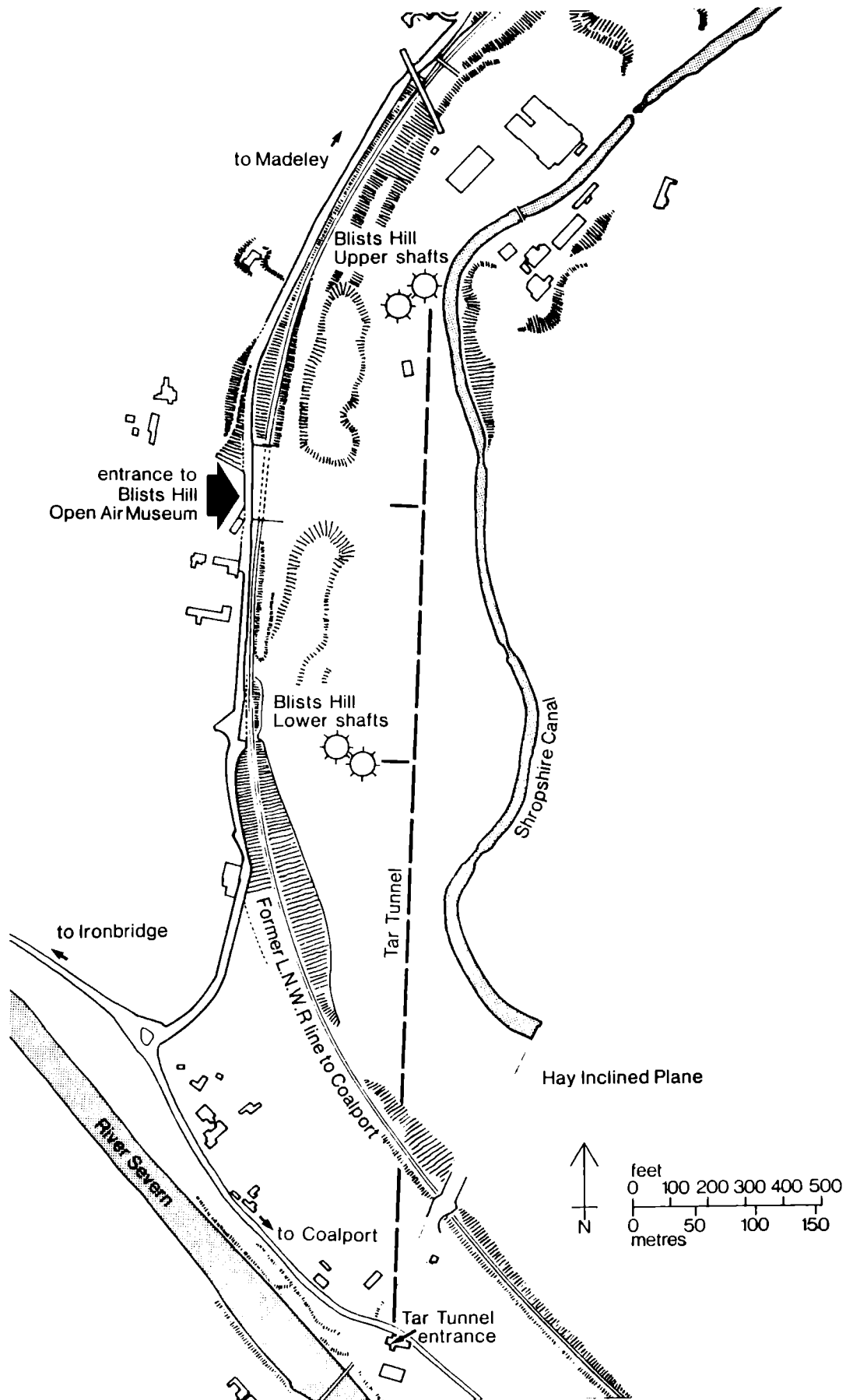


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☼ FALL/BLOCKED

BLISTS HILL TAR TUNNEL, SHROPSHIRE.

Subterranea Britannica has among its documents a copy of 4.04 The Tar Tunnel, abridged from The Coalport Tar Tunnel by Ivor J. Brown and Barrie Trinder, and published by the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust in association with the Shropshire Mining Club. We gratefully acknowledge the permission of the Director of the Ironbridge Museum Trust to quote from the publication.



Blists Hill Tar Tunnel cont'd

Tar is a distillate of coal, so that the substance which oozes from the sides of the tunnel is not tar but natural bitumen or mineral oil. This is composed of hydro-carbons - the remains of microscopic plants and animals alive millions of years ago and buried by sediment in marine basins and freshwater lakes. Gravity and movements in the earth's crust have led the mineral oil to migrate and impregnate the sandstone of the Coalbrookdale Coalfield. The existence of a 'Tar Tunnel' and other bituminous springs in the area prompted prospecting during the inter-war years. A borehole put down in the locality went through beds of shale, sandstone, limestone, thin coal seams and then sandstone impregnated with 'tar' (i.e. natural bitumen). The quantities were insufficient to warrant commercial exploitation although research has continued to the present day into the quality and origins of the tar.

The tunnel, which dates back to 1787 is roughly 1000 yards (914.39 m) long and is a source of natural bitumen which still collects in cavities dug for the purpose nearly 200 years ago. An Italian nobleman described the workmen as being 'like the imps described by Dante in his Inferno as gathering with a hook the souls of the damned in a sea of pitch, so horribly disfigured and begrimed are they'. The tunnel was rediscovered several years ago when the Shropshire Mining Club had permission to explore behind a door in the cellar of a Coalport village store.

The original purpose of this tunnel, however, was not for the production of bitumen. Towards the end of the 18th Century, industry was changing the face of that part of Shropshire. If the coal and iron industry was to expand, the problem of transport had to be tackled. By 1792 newspapers reported that a level driven by William Reynolds from the Severn Bank and under the Hay Inclined Plane was to serve several collieries, partly as a drain and partly as a navigable waterway. However, in 1796 a railway was built through it.

During the building of the tunnel natural tar began to gush out, a superior tar to that made by burning coal, and a reservoir was built to hold it. Large cauldrons were sunk into pits for the boiling of tar which had been diverted into them through iron pipes.

This tar was used mainly for treating hemp ropes and caulking boats, but those who suffered 'rheumatic and scorbutic affections' could use 'Bettone British Oil', a medicinal preparation containing it.

Production diminished, after which the tunnel continued to be used as an adjunct to the Blists Hill Mines. In the 1930's miners working at the Blists Hill upper shafts 'walked' the tunnels. By this time the pits were being worked for clay and the tunnel helped to provide ventilation. Later it was to serve as an air-raid shelter.

Visitors are allowed to go 300 ft. (91.44 m.) into the tunnel where stalactites hang from the brick lining. But were they allowed to go further they would see a drainage channel, several portals for cavities (which had probably been made to act as tar wells), a clay dam, and after the narrowing of the tunnel a series of small ochre dams. One of the cavities contains two feet (0.60 m.) of sticky liquid tar. The cramped conditions of this part of the tunnel make exploration very uncomfortable and the ochrous sediment and floating tar can easily ruin the clothes of explorers.

ELEANOR CLARK.

WANTED Copy of F. T. WAINWRIGHT'S The Souterrains of Southern Pictland
Please contact: Mr. P. McCarthy, Lynbrook, Fenvoirlich Estate,
Bishopstow, Cork, Ireland.

"FARMER'S" SITE, SOUTH PARADE, AND ITS CAVES:

NOTTINGHAM 1974.

Summary: The following article describes and illustrates man-made caves or rock cellars on a major building site in central Nottingham. The accompanying site plans show the relative density of known 'souterrains' on this site which, together with another at Drury Hill, developed after 1968 to make way for the Broad Marsh Shopping Centre. Excavation and recording of both was undertaken by Nottingham Historical Arts Society which first published an article in their bulletin for December 1974. Both sites are typical of areas in the centre of Medieval Nottingham.

Two more Nottingham cave malt kilns have recently been identified and an article on these as a peculiar Nottingham feature is forthcoming.

Farmer's site, on South Parade, Nottingham was an important one fronting the Old Market Square. When Farmer's, the drapery firm after whom the site was named, moved in 1972/1973 it was desirable to investigate the premises for archaeological evidence of their early history. Little was known of the development of shops on the Market Place, or of the buildings behind the frontages. The site was large, extending from South Parade to St. Peter's Gate, and from Peck Lane to Exchange Walk. Only a few shops on the East Side of Exchange Walk, were to remain - Shoefayre, Walkers, Bellmans and Wakefields, the rest, including the old Eight Bells Public House, were to be demolished for new shop and office developments.

With the co-operation of the developers N.H.A.S. searched the standing buildings for the early cellars and artificial caves normally to be found in central Nottingham. The buildings themselves were apparently 19th Century or much mutilated late 18th Century. Deep cellars discouraged optimism that Medieval shop plans might be recovered by excavating Farmer's. Only two caves were found at the North East of the site where South Parade joins Peck Lane, and these seemed small and probably late. Both were dug into the Bunter sandstone underlying the whole of central Nottingham. One, F.3. extended partly under South Parade itself, the other F.4., adjoined Peck Lane. Both lay beneath the former No. 20, South Parade, though F.3. projected under No. 19. This is important when we later discuss the history of Nos. 19 and 20.

In early 1974, J. Watts Limited demolished Farmer's and the Eight Bells. During demolition Nos. 19 and 20 revealed themselves as late 17th Century - early 18th Century brick buildings concealed by 19th Century facades and extensions. Fortunately some photographs were taken for the Museum just before destruction of the most informative parts - the less altered attics and roofs. A wood framed attic window and decorative brickwork above survived just long enough to be rescued - the rest of the upper building came down that afternoon. Significantly the window in the West gable wall of No. 20 had been blocked by the erection of No. 19 soon afterwards to judge by the roof structure. The window was constructed about 1650 - 1670. The Thomas Sandby engraving of the East view of the Market Place in the early 1740's shows a building of similar proportions to those surviving recently, giving at the most less than 100 years between the building of No. 19 and No. 20. Thomas Smith, mercer and later founder of Britain's first country bank, bought a building at the junction of Peck Lane and South Parade in 1658 and later acquired premises to the West for his enlarged banking business. He died in 1699. According to Robert Mellors in Man of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, pp. 79-80, Thomas Smith made three separate cellars beneath his basement kitchen entered by trap door and a ladder, and another set below them approached by steps and partly under the public street (cave F.3). This account may be a little garbled, for traces of a basement kitchen were seen in No. 20, but not under No. 19.

Farmer's Site Nottingham cont'd

In 1754 Abel Smith II bought two houses West of the present Exchange Walk, on the site of what is now the National Westminster Bank. To the East of these (probably where Exchange Walk now lies) were buildings then belonging to Ichabod Wright, another Nottingham banker. Cave F.1 is located under that spot and may have served as cellars for Wright's Bank in the later 18th Century. But its former entrances were blocked under Farmer's by 1877 when Exchange Walk was constructed.

F.1 consists of three caves with an additional one left roofless by the contractors. This may have been an antechamber adjacent to one of the two brick stair shafts found by them. Horizontal rectangular niches had been cut in its North East Wall, hence the nickname "Bookcase Cave". The other caves possessed stone 'thralls' or benches for storage common in Nottingham caves.

One cave in the F.1 group is below Exchange Walk.

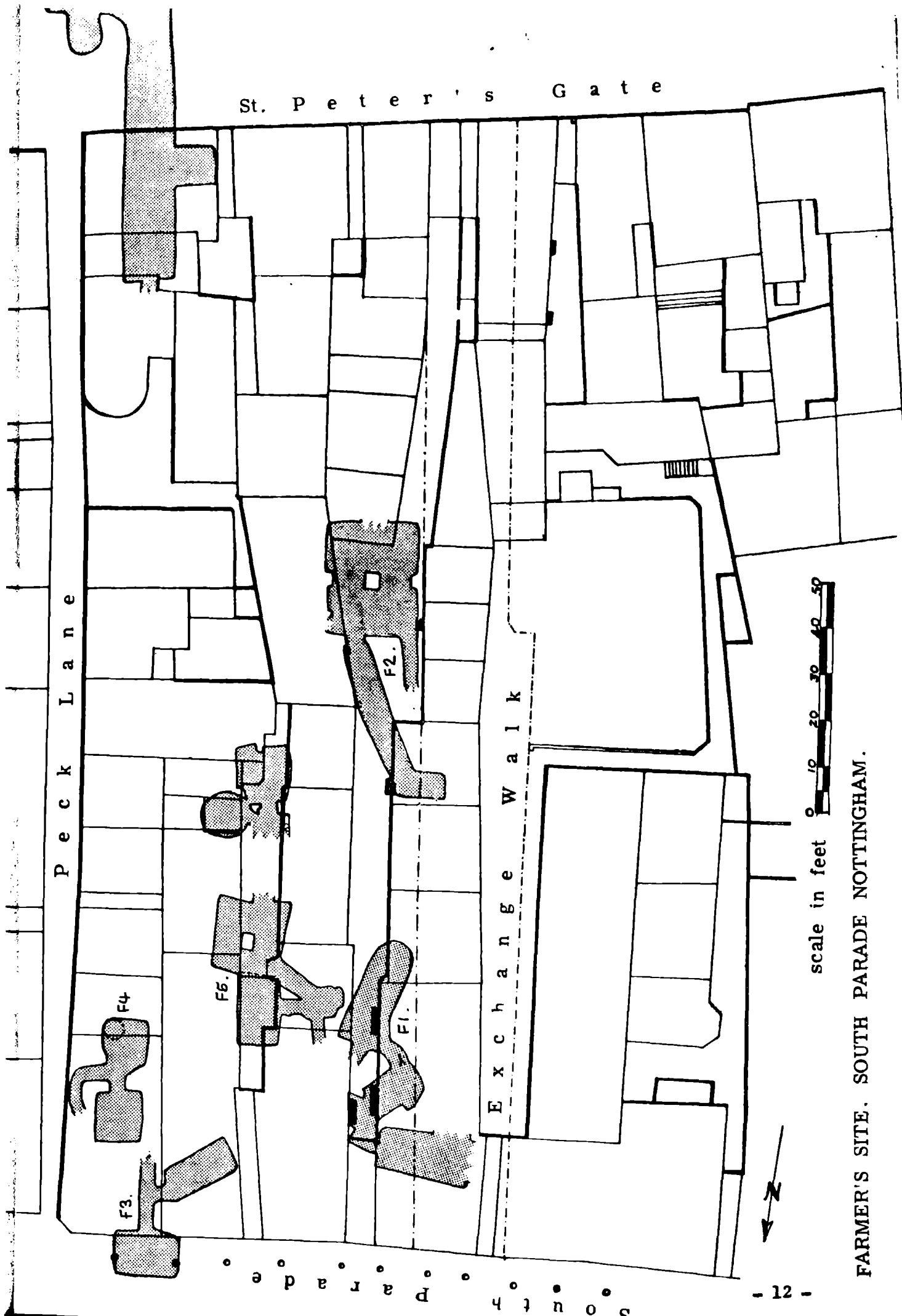
Exchange Walk, constructed in 1877, replaced the earlier and narrow lane known as Gear's Yard, which after 1835 became Farmer's Yard then James Farmer bought the site to its East. Cave F.1 underlies the former No. 17 South Parade, West of Farmer's or Gear's Yard. No signs of the cave and its entrances was seen until removal of the cellar floors just East of Exchange Walk. Moreover, a bricked-up doorway in an earlier brick wall sub-divided the earlier stone pillared cave just East of the present National Westminster Bank. Clearly this cave now beneath Exchange Walk extended further West towards the Bank, perhaps to No. 16 South Parade, or within the yard East of it shown on Jackson's Nottingham Map No. 51, 1851 - 1861.

Dating F.1 is difficult. Much of the brickwork in arches, benches or thralls, blockings and stair shafts looks 18th Century, but could be of any date between the late 17th and mid 19th Century. A round stone pillar visible at the junction of two brick blocking walls is possibly earlier.

Partly under Shoefayre, its layout conforming closely to the outline of Farmer's Yard, Cave F.2 was entered by a brick lined stair shaft from the North. It consisted of a rectangular cave with a square central pillar. Two probably earlier entrances had been bricked-up in the 19th Century. These were in the South wall under Walker's the Jewellers, and in the North East corner, entered by stone steps. A passage also leading from the North side led to a well and turned left towards Exchange Walk where it was blocked. Through a hole in the blocking a further small cave could be seen filled with sand and containing part of a small 15th Century jug of Midland purple ware type. Rubbish to a depth of nearly one metre in the main F.2 cave contained nothing earlier than the late 19th Century. Beneath this a partial brick floor had been constructed soon after 1800, but a cross carved on the central pillar is paralleled in Nottingham caves by one on Middle Pavement and in the cross over a pre-1600 doorway in the former Severn's caves, also on Middle Pavement. Minus the incised cross, the same form of pillar appears again in Farmer's ("Graffiti") cave F.5 where it is dated between about 1300 and 1550.

The largest of Farmer's caves appeared next at the South end of the site, under the Eight Bells Public House. A contractor's lorry entering the site, from St. Peter's Gate broke through the pavement to reveal a deep circular shaft. From its bottom a cave stretched almost to the South side of the street and North under the former public house. Here it had been entered presumably by a staircase, but was blocked by a cascade of brick rubble. Under the street the cave was covered with 1.5 m. of sand and numerous late 19th Century barrel hoops, and beer and spirit bottles. The North end was comparatively free of filling, two brick benches lined the walls, and remains of rubber tubes for beer pumps lay on the floor.

St. Peter's Gate



scale in feet 0 10 20 30 40 50



FARMER'S SITE. SOUTH PARADE NOTTINGHAM.

Farmer's Site Nottingham cont'd

The Eight Bells cave (F.6) was to be expected under a public house of 1800, but F.5 the Graffiti cave, was a surprise in the middle of such a large site. Trial borings showed the presence of caves, and three were found in a small area, with a strong possibility of a fourth having originally lain between them. Remains of unusually large wall foundations of Bunter sandstone lay within a rectangle over these caves and descended (three metres) to the roof of one of them. F.5 and its associated wall are, apart from the remains of Smiths first bank, archaeologically the most significant features of the site. Dating Nottingham caves is very difficult and opportunities to relate them to surface buildings are rare. Here we have the foundations of a building roughly dated by two unabraded late 13th Century potsherds found in the make-up of the wall. The nature of this wall, rough sandstone blocks with red clay mortar, is characteristic of late 13th Century wall cores and foundations throughout the city (e.g. the Town Wall, the stairwell surround to caves at No. 8 Castlegate, and foundations at Fishergate recently excavated by Charles Young).

The F.5 group of caves comprised:-

(1) A square cave at the South end. On its North side was a vertical shaft, only partly revealed during excavations but believed to be an entrance shaft entered in the North West corner.

(2) A smaller (stoke) hole alongside gave access to a circular cave malt kiln in the North East corner.

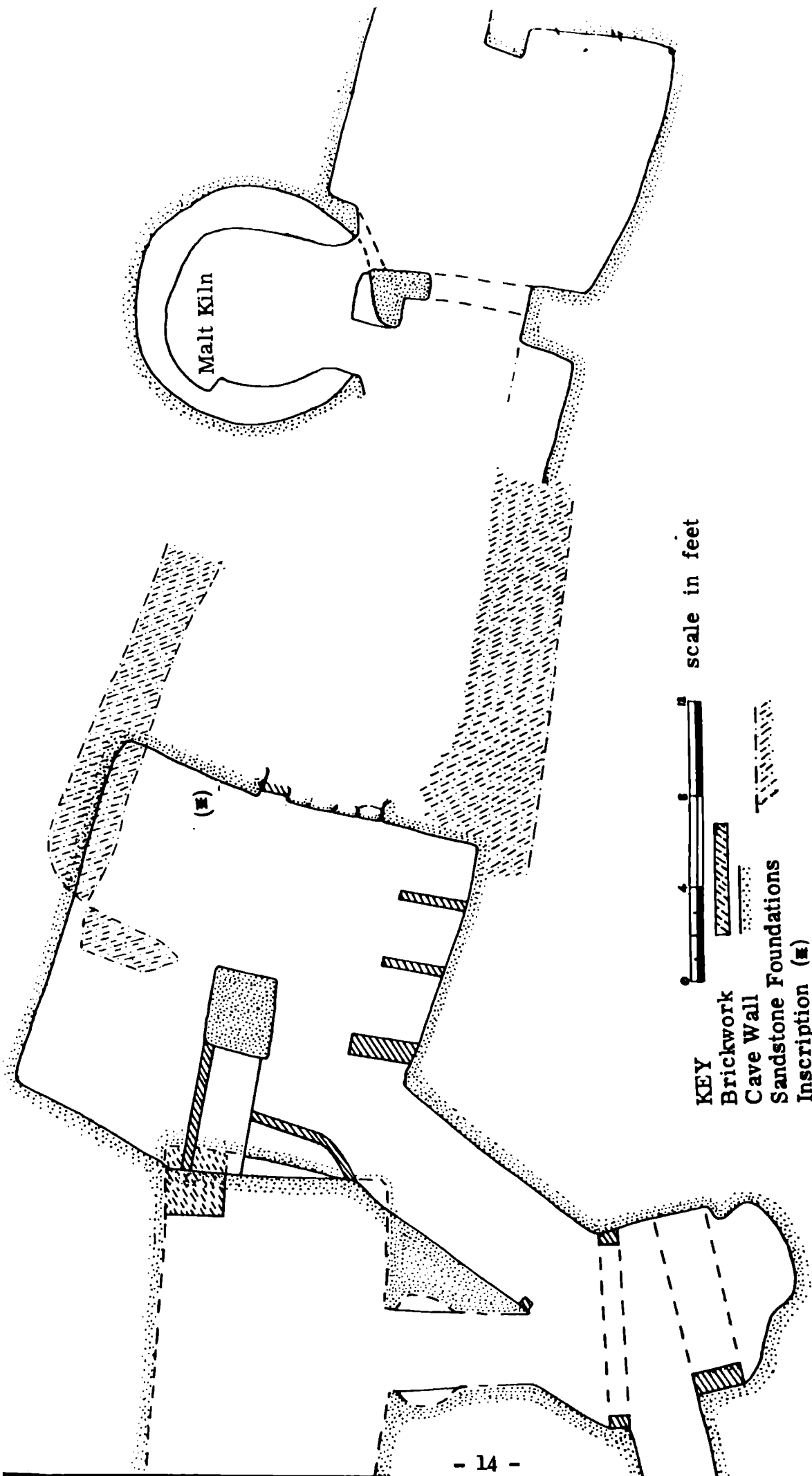
(3) Some five metres further North a square cave with a square central pillar contained the inscription which is the single most interesting feature of the complex. Between the first two caves and the "Graffiti" cave 17th Century rubble blocked the way. It is not possible to prove conclusively that these caves form a single group completed by an intervening fourth and surmounted by a contemporary stone building covering them, but it seems very likely. The two southern caves had been filled from their common shaft with rubbish of consistent late 16th Century - early 17th Century character, the latest items in which were clay pipes and a fragment of slipware which might be as late as 1650. Also found was a bronze coin weight for the gold half rose noble or ryal of Edward IV. Weights for these coins were made in England and the Netherlands down to at least 1636.

The malt kiln was approximately round in plan 2.3 metres high with a horizontal bench at half height. Below this was the fire pit had been slightly undercut, an unusual feature. In Nottingham six of these cave malt kilns are known and the others all have simple bowl shaped or conical fire pits below the bench.

Just above the West side of the entrance shaft a finely chamfered ashlar lintel supported the massive rubble wall foundations above. It was clearly intended to be seen from inside the caves, making the wall contemporary or possibly later than the caves themselves.

The Graffiti cave was empty of rubble when found, but its entrance had been sealed in the 19th Century presumably in 1877 when Farmers built their new premises along Exchange Walk. This entrance, in the North West corner of the cave, does not seem to be original. Construction of the lower cave had broken through the floor of the "Graffiti" cave and a common entrance provided but this looked like an after-thought and suggests re-discovery and re-use of a cave sealed and forgotten. Difference in the discolouration of the cave wall at the junction of the corner entrance and the cave proper reinforces this view.

Shorn of its (later) corner entrance the "Graffiti" cave was a simple rectangle with a square central pillar. In the South side of the cave another doorway had been blocked with late 17th Century - 18th Century rubble masonry and brick. Rubbish behind this blocking included Midland Purple ware of the 17th Century. Above and to the left of the doorway a small 'window' was also blocked with early brick. Below the window the name 'PEEL' was boldly incised in Roman capitals, probably in the 19th Century to judge by its style. Left again a



CAVE F.5 FARMER'S SITE, NOTTINGHAM.

Farmer's Site Nottingham cont'd

fainter but better executed inscription in Medieval court hand read "trowelle". At least that is the interpretation if the central letter or letters is read as the long 'w' current in court hand from the 11th to the 16th Century. If Medieval, this is the first such inscription from a Nottingham cave. The form of the letters is close to that on a map of Sherwood Forest c.1400 and unlikely to be a romantic 'gothick' attempt of the last century (before 1877). Read as 'Trowell' and not as first thought, 'trollkelle' it is a proper noun: either the name of Trowell village six miles West of Nottingham or the surname Trowell derived from it and known in the city from 1369 to 1550 and beyond. The latter is more probable. Entries in the Nottingham Council Archives show a Sir Richard Trowell, priest of St. Peters and chaplain of the Guild of the Blessed Mary in that church, resident in St. Petre Lane (now St. Peters Gate) paying 4d. rental for a bay window to the Chamber Estate about 1527-30. He still lived there presumably in a house belonging to the church in 1550 but had gone by 1552. Although we do not yet know where his house lay in relation to the cave the coincidence is strong.

Stylistically the inscription could be as late as the early 16th Century when priests were still rare literates in a largely illiterate population. If for the reasons stated above, the "Graffiti" cave is part of the malt kiln complex, it is unlikely to have been constructed before about 1300, and between 1600 and 1650 much of this complex was filled. Only the "Graffiti" cave was left open, or possibly emptied of rubbish after re-discovery during construction of the cave beneath it. The inscription then was cut between 1300 and 1650 and probably before 1550. Further documentary research may show where Richard Trowell and his antecedents lived. The finding of this cave and its inscription should help locate his residence with precision.

When all the caves are plotted on a map of the site as it was before 1877 they can be seen to be within the site boundaries of the old properties. Some (F.5 and F.2) are interesting in that they lie beneath yards rather than buildings. Only those under 20 South Parade (Smith's first bank) and the Eight Bells cave on St. Peter's Gate which are 17th Century or later are clearly entered from within their respective buildings. F.5, (the "Graffiti" Cave) which is certainly pre-1600, F.2 and F.1 which may be early, are situated largely under the yards so as to provide entrance (F.1 and F.5) access to a well (F.2) or a smoke vent in the case of the malt kiln at F.5.

Where another malt kiln was found in 1966 at No. 8 Castlegate, the whole cave complex filled about 1600, lay at the back of an elongated site, suggesting again a possible position beneath a yard or at least a light industrial structure.

Though there are some discrepancies where inadequate surveying on the part of its constructors led to cave boundaries encroaching on neighbouring property, the tendency is for these smaller Nottingham caves to reflect the alignment of the buildings and boundaries above. Given the date of any group of caves of this kind on a large site in central Nottingham it should be possible to reconstruct in some degree the general layout of premises above even where all surface traces have gone. What one cannot so easily determine is whether the presence of caves indicates the positions of a building or only a yard belonging to an adjacent property. The surprisingly deep and broad sandstone foundations above F.5 look more like the base for a large building than footings for a courtyard. It may be that here we have some evidence for a change in the plan of late Medieval - post Medieval buildings which hopefully might be amplified by further study of the documentary evidence.

ALAN MACCORMICK

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Of the work of society members, Ron Sheldon's skilled cave surveys and Dr. Chris Salisbury's excellent photographic coverage of the caves on colour slides should be singled out. The results of this work are to be housed in Castle Museum.



"TROWELLE" inscription, Cave F.5 Farmer's Site,
Nottingham.

WARNING:

Paul Sowan sent us the following item from Museums Bulletin 18 (1), p 7, April, 1978. We hope members will take note and where possible discourage people from 'vandalising' and 'pilfering' underground structures.

Stripping of Mines

North Cardiganshire Mining Club have sent us a copy of an advertisement they had noticed offering rare mining tools for sale and would like to draw attention to disadvantages of the practice of stripping mines for personal gain. Whilst the club has no objection to objects being removed for museum and club displays, it dislikes the practice of stripping mines of their relics except where necessary, or of outsiders going into areas where other clubs and museums operate with the sole purpose of stripping out relics and recovering scrap. They would like to encourage all clubs and museums to secure their rarer and easily pilfered finds, to display them and to make their whereabouts known.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY - 30th June and 1st July, 1978 hoped to have a Conference at Ironbridge as part of their celebrations for their Bicentenary. Sometime around the 14th July, 1978 will be the S.F.E.S. Conference at the Charente maritime.

